FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Volume 45, Number 2 April 1994

The purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

From the Articles of Incorporation, 1950.

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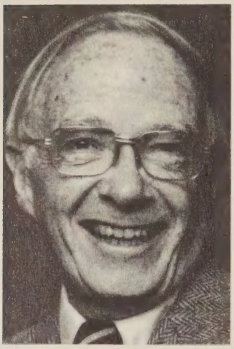


Why pray? What good does it do? What are your hopes and expectations for prayer? What would it mean to "pray without ceasing" as Christian scripture urges, or to become a "walking prayer" in the Native American tradition? Are prayers and praying and prayerfulness the same thing?

In a wonderful book titled *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer—An Approach to Life in Fullness*, the well-known Benedictine monk, Brother David Steindl-Rast, offers inspiring and thought-provoking reflections on the meaning and promise of prayers, praying, and prayerfulness.

To "give ourselves continually to prayer," or to pray without ceasing, we must learn to become as little children again and look with concentrated wonder and attention at everything around us. When we're able to sustain that attitude of mindfulness toward everything we see, hear, touch, or do—our whole life becomes a prayer. We begin to experience the miracle and meaning of everything—even starting with that first cup of coffee in the morning!—as a manifestation of the ultimate reality we call God—the divine source of our being.

Indeed, Brother David says drinking and eating, like everything else we do can and should be an important part of our prayer life. Looking deeply into a piece of bread, as the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, tells us, we can see the sun and rain and earth and seeds that contributed to its creation. We can picture the vast interactive network of animals, birds, plants, minerals, people—everything in God's creation—that came together to produce the bread for our nourishment. In gratitude and thanksgiving for that divine gift of life, Buddhists recite the following grace before each meal:

This food comes from the Earth and the Sky
It is the gift of the entire universe
And the fruit of much hard work
I vow to live a life that is worthy to receive it.

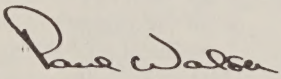
Praying, in fact, can accompany everything we do as a constant acknowledgement that everything in life, including life itself, is a given—an unearned gift from God.

If an ongoing attitude of prayerfulness is the heart of spirituality, the question then becomes: who needs to say actual prayers? The answer is, I do. You do. Prayers fill a deeply felt need we all experience; the need to express our prayerfulness. Prayers, Brother David tells us, both give form to and reinforce our prayerfulness. As the expression of our prayerfulness, prayers make us more prayerful. More alive. More conscious of the spark of divinity in ourselves and in everyone we meet. More aware of the sacred source and ultimate meaning of our life.

As to the forms your prayers take, Brother David reminds us that "You are unique. If your prayer is genuine, it will be the grateful expression of your uniqueness."

This will be true whether you make up your own prayers or select from a book the particular prayer that best expresses your hope, your suffering, your joy, your gratitude. Your choice will be a mirror of what is in your heart.

The process—part conscious, part unconscious—of selecting the form which your prayer will take is completely creative, completely your own. At any given moment you may choose to recite a prayer or poem, repeat a mantra, or sit in silent meditation listening for the word that heals. You may spontaneously sing, dance, or do whatever nourishes and deepens your prayerfulness. Prayer, says Brother David, is simply grateful living.



Paul Walsh

As the spiritual renaissance bursts into fire all around us and all over the world, ancient prayer traditions are being rediscovered which are rekindling the passionate religious vision of women and men who were close to God, to nature and one another.

Few of these traditions burn more brightly than the Celtic (a blend of Druid spirituality with pre-monastic and early monastic Christianity in the area of Britain and Ireland). The meeting of minds and hearts that took place there, especially in the fifth and sixth centuries, resulted in a literature glowing with poetry and an intense love of life.

Here is a representative Celtic prayer. Grappling with the ineffability of the Divine Life, the writer turns to soft images full of the mystical feeling so typical of the Celtic spirit:

I am the wind that breathes upon the sea,
I am the wave on the ocean,
I am the murmur of leaves rustling,
I am the rays of the sun
I am the beam of the moon and the stars,
I am the power of trees growing,
I am the bud breaking into blossom,
I am the movement of the salmon swimming,
I am the courage of the wild boar fighting,
I am the speed of the stag running,
I am the strength of the ox pulling the plough,
I am the size of the mighty oak tree,
And I am the thoughts of all people
Who praise my beauty and grace.

Such lovely prayers, lost so long ago in the darkness of history, deserve to live now as eternal flames, warming the hearts of men and women in all of the world, whatever their faith or philosophy.

Mary Ford-Grabowsky

Robert F. Campbell

Let nothing upset you,
Let nothing frighten you.
Everything is changing;
God alone is changeless.
Patience attains the goal.
Who has God lacks nothing;
God alone fills all their needs.
Teresa of Avila

No writing on the solitary, meditative dimensions of life can say anything that has not already been said better by the wind in the pine trees.
Thomas Merton

The speech of the Psalms . . . announces that our common experience is not one of well-being and equilibrium, that life is not like that. Life is instead a churning, disruptive experience of dislocation and relocation . . . Most of the Psalms can only be appropriately prayed by people who are living at the edges of their lives, sensitive to the raw hurts, the primitive passions, and the native elations that are at the bottom of life.
Walter Brueggemann

One often confuses God for one's concept of God.
Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan

I am a flame of fire, blazing with passionate love,
I am a spark of light, illuminating the deepest truth,
I am a rough ocean, heaving with righteous anger,
I am a calm lake, comforting the troubled breast,
I am a wild storm, raging at human sins,
I am a gentle breeze, blowing hope in the saddened heart,
I am a dry dust, choking worldly ambition
I am a wet earth, bearing rich fruits of grace.
From the Celtic Tradition

Acclaim God, all the earth, play music to the glory of God's name.
Ps. 66.1-2

A River of Darkness . . . And An Island of Peace

WILLIAM R. VINCENT

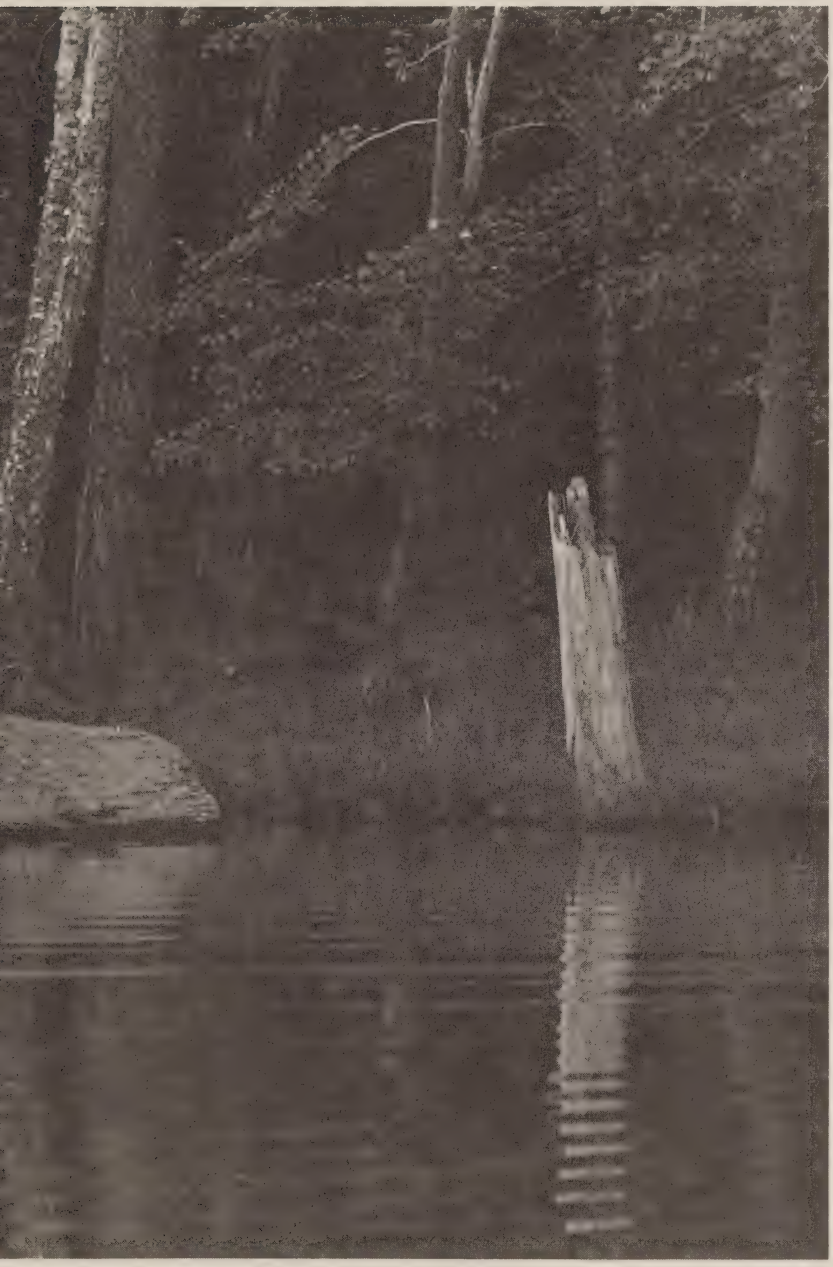
A gentle, hopeful message from a man who has explored the universal terrain of the human mind and spirit.

There is a river of darkness running through my mind. For a very long time I have thought that this darkness was an intimate part of me and I struggled desperately to hide from it and pretend in many different ways that it was not there . . . that it was not I. By the grace of God a new and powerful awareness has gradually been awakened in me. I have come to realize that there is indeed a dark and menacing corner of my mind . . . and there is also a place of light and joy and peace in my mind.

The awareness that there are two sources of thought of a radically different nature existing side by side in my mind is immensely helpful and comforting to me. For as I have come to realize that there is an island of peace and joy within my mind I have found the courage to look directly at the nature of the dark place. What I have come to see so clearly is that this river of darkness does not represent anything of the truth about me . . . or anyone. The river is a flowing, never ceasing current of judgment directed at whatever the mind focuses on in a given moment. In a very real sense it is not about anyone or anything outside of me, although it always seems to be. It is about an imagined loss, a sense of separation from God, a deeply imbedded sense of guilt for the separation I have somehow caused, and the fear of the inevitable punishment for what I have done. It is the central idea that there is something fundamentally and irreparably wrong with me, for which I must sooner or later pay with my life. And it is a lie.

In a way I shall probably never understand how I long ago accepted this river of darkness, this constant commentary of fear and distrust, as my truth . . . as my ground of being. As the me that I know continues to emerge and expand I begin to hear and love something else which exists in my mind. This something else, this island of peace, is none

Dr. Bill Vincent is a specialist in pediatric cardiology in Pasadena, CA.



other than the Voice for God . . . the Holy Spirit. With each day I find unlimited opportunities to observe what I experience in my heart as I choose to listen to the voice of fear . . . or the Voice of Love. It remains difficult, at times impossible, to take my attention from the familiar and compelling voice of darkness and turn instead to the place of peace. It is, after all, an ancient and deeply ingrained habit which I am working to change. But I do experience many instants of success. Every time I succeed in turning my attention from this commentary of fear and become still enough to listen to another Voice I find my experience of fear replaced by one of peace. Darkness is replaced by light.

I am so grateful to learn that there is a raging torrent of negativity always moving through my mind, and that there is a loving and totally accepting Presence with me as well. Each instant in which I turn from the river of darkness and I choose the peace of God as my only goal I take another step toward freedom and into living in the light . . . as God created me.

Caribbean Encounter

VINCENT KAVALOSKI

Two men from two radically different worlds meet and connect at the deep, mysterious level of spirit.

We are all wanderers on the night shore.

We wander along the lonely shore, hearing only the lapping of the waves, in a rhythm older than poetry and deeper than thought. Sometimes, if we are lucky, if we are very lucky, we encounter mystery, something that connects us to the source.

Long ago, in the turbulent pain of youth, I encountered mystery on the night sea shore, under a haunting half-moon, wandering with the waves, seeking solace.

He was bent over, under a palm tree, in the lush Jamaican night, carving flakes of white wood flew from fingers upward into the moon-filled night. I had passed by on previous evenings, nodding noncommittally, intrigued but too shy to speak. Now he gestured to me, a bent figure with a grey-black beard, a man creating life from a dead log-end. I ask what he is carving, and he says "He be bornin, I jus' be helpin' him be bornin' out 'de wood."

"Who is it?" I ask, "Who are you helping come forth from the wood?"

He looks up, and our eyes lock in the salt-sweet Caribbean night, a night laden with the whispers of past lives and ancient civilizations, risen and fallen. The Carver smiles through tangled grey-black dreadlocks. "Could be 'de Rasta Man, could be 'de Lion of Juda, could be . . . 'de Philosopher."

I crouch down in the sand, and we meet, two strangers from different races, two worlds meet in the mystery of the Caribbean night. The waves crash louder now, the moon flickers behind blackening clouds. "Storm come now. Storm be Ja's wake-up call. Got to wake-up." He laughs.

The thunder rumbles off in the distance, jagged streaks of light flash out to sea. The Carver and I speak of ancient wisdom, Mayan astronomer-priests, and from another sea, half a world away, the Greek philosophers, Thales, Pythagoras, and Socrates, who also pondered the mystery of sea, sky and earth. He tells of the winds of thought sweeping

A philosophy teacher at Edgewood College in Madison, WI, Vincent Kavaloski is co-director with his wife of the Ecumenical Partnership for Pace and Justice. His most recent book is Dreaming the World Awake.

Tom Dunham

across wide seas from Africa, Africa the proud Black Queen. Yes, the Greek philosophers spoke of their debt to Egypt, black, brown, multi-colored Egypt, the melting pot of ancient Africa.

In the rising clamor of the Caribbean storm, I hear a voice chanting in the wind, chanting in the history-laden visions of a pulsing, common source. We are connected, he and I, two worlds merging from a common, ancient spring. But then come the creaking slave ships with their cargos of human misery and then the sun drenched slave plantations. The connecting thread is broken.

The thunder crashed above us now, and in the lightening-streaked, warm Caribbean rain, we crouch together under the palm leaves, an old man carving, and a lost young wanderer, two worlds seeking an ancient common bond. Layer upon layer of Caribbean history unfolds in his stories: British buccaneers, Spanish conquistadores, French war-ships, all in quest of gold, silver, slaves, eternal youth, all the mad delusions of a materialist-obsessed culture that has forgotten . . . the source.

"Someday 'de Black Queen, she arise, she take her place in 'de New Creation. Until then, you . . . 'de philosopher, you must . . . remember."

The roar from the sea tears through my fevered mind like a Caribbean hurricane, sweeping all before it, out into the rain-drenched night.

The next morning, as I prepare to leave Jamaica, I find something outside my door. It is a carving of a magnificent, polished head. I never saw the Carver again. But sometimes on a chilly Wisconsin winter day, I light a fire in the wood-burning stove, and set the carved head out to contemplate. It could be a Jamaican Rasta, or an ancient Greek philosopher, or an Egyptian seer, or an ancient son of the Black Queen, Africa.

Sometimes, it seems, the Philosopher's eyes are looking inward, as if seeking something ineffable, a lost sacred thread of connection, searching a distant, sea-washed shore, waiting and wandering.

Desiderata

Go placidly amid the noise and haste and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant; they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals; and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment love is perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars. You have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive God to be, and whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace with your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be careful. Strive to be happy.

Found in Old Saint Paul's Church, Baltimore, Dated 1692

Feeding the Homeless

FRANK HUTCHINSON

Please send the story of your own "transforming experience" to the Editor, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542. You need not be a professional writer. Just describe a spiritual experience that made a difference in your life or in someone else's life.

It was March of 1957, on a dusty dawn morning in Calcutta, that I came to know the real Sergeant Gray. Since early February I had been surveying Asia's refugee, disaster, and emergency programs of the American Protestant churches carried out by Church World Service.

There had been a look at starving northern Japan, with Hokkaido suffering from a total rice-harvest disaster. Korea's continued existence was extremely doubtful, with millions homeless and starving. Taiwan was clearly a basket case, with uncounted homeless barely keeping alive on U.S. Government commodities. The first glimpse of Hong Kong revealed a large public square where 10,000 people in long lines waited for food, clothing, and hopefully a place to sleep other than a sheltered doorway. Burma suffered from a civil war, with no safe travel outside Rangoon which was jammed with tens of thousands of refugees. Pakistan still bled from its violent separation from India. And now Calcutta.

> Saintliness never rubbed off on me. But certain I am that my work . . . attained a higher level of unselfish concern than would have ever been the case had Sergeant Gray not touched me so deeply.

A friend characterized that ancient city as a "Human Dead Sea", with thousands of additional refugees flowing into it daily and with no departures! Perhaps two million refugees.

A retired Presbyterian minister, Frank Hutchison has lived a life of service to others for over half a century in North America, Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle East. Now in his 80s, he lives iwth his wife in Las Cruces, NM and continues to work and travel at a remarkably youthful pace. His most recent book is Aging Come of Age: Older People Finding Themselves.

At the Salvation Army headquarters I met Sergeant Gray. He was chiefly responsible for that agency's city-wide distribution of U.S. surplus food imported by Church World Service as well as Catholic Relief Services.

He was an amazing person. While with the British army forces in India during World War II, he was caught up by the widespread human tragedy in Calcutta. His free time was given over to volunteering with the Salvation Army. When the war ended and he was discharged in England, he returned at once on his own to Calcutta. There he worked full time with the city's poor in the massive slum areas.

Gray offered to show me one of the ways food was distributed to the homeless. The next morning at dawn I started off with him.

He had a large flat-bed truck which carried three large wash tubs of steaming cooked rice. There would be a brief stop at a corner where a group awaited him. He would dole out some food, then move on to the next corner. And again and again.

Patti Wood Whiteley

Later there was a surprising stop in the middle of a block. The Sergeant motioned to me to follow him as he went forward with a pan of food in his hand. We entered a run-down structure and mounted the stairs. Strange sounds of women's voices and Indian music could be heard. At the top floor we were met by some scantily-clad women. Upon seeing the Salvation Army uniform they disappeared into their rooms. It was clearly a house of prostitution.

Stretched out on a blanket on the narrow hall floor was an elderly man, not much more than skin and bones. The Sergeant knelt by the mat and spoonfed him until he was satisfied. He ended with a simple blessing in Urdu that could have been as much Hindu as Christian.

The women permitted this dying man floor space, even though his depressing presence must have hurt their business. In addition, if he died in the building, it could be considered cursed and thus unfit for habitation.

That morning I sensed that I had not only been in the presence of tender-hearted prostitues aiding a dying man, but especially that of an authentic 20th century saint.

Over the years I have been asked what was my most moving spiritual experience as I worked with Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists. Without any hesitation I would relate the story of being with the Salvation Army Sergeant that day in Calcutta.

That was the last time I saw that person in the flesh, but, in spirit, he was with me during the coming years.

In Taiwan he was present as we of the Christian agencies set up feeding stations and school lunch programs for the millions of Taiwanese homeless and the forgotten aborigines mountain people, also medical clinics, work programs, and temporary housing beginnings.

Gray was surely present in spirit as Hong Kong was being helped to become a more liveable place for the great mass of men, women, and children flooding the tiny area from the mainland. Children, old people, and nursing mothers were fed daily, and medical care was provided, even a TB clinic in the neighboring Other Territories. Through work projects Chinese were helping Chinese. "Street Sleepers" were given night-time shelter.

He was with me later in 1963 when India faced its third year of no monsoon rains. We of the international church agencies working in India brought together all the available forces and sources of assistance. The World Council of Churches was challenged to raise millions of

dollars, as was the Vatican, and both came through. Well-drilling rigs were flown in from Europe to provide drinking water for total drought areas. Work projects digging wells and setting up agricultural developments to produce immediate foods were created by church volunteers using emergency funds. Much of the caring world had come to India's rescue at this time of great human peril. Surely the Sergeant's spirit had driven all of us.

He was the saint. Saintliness never rubbed off on me. But certain I am that my work abroad in the 1950s and 1960s attained a higher level of unselfish concern than would ever have been the case had Sergeant Gray not touched me so deeply, early in my professional life. Humble gratitude is the word that comes to mind.

Cycles of Life

A Light exists in Spring
Not present in the Year
At any other period—
When March is scarcely here

A Color stands abroad
on Solitary Fields
That Science cannot overtake
But Human Nature feels.

It waits upon the Lawn
It shows upon the furthest Tree
Upon the furthest Slope you know
It almost speaks to you.

Then as Horizons step
Or Noons report away
Without the Formula of sound
It passes and we stay—

A quality of loss
Affecting our Content
As Trade had suddenly encroached
Upon a Sacrament.

Emily Dickinson

Look Homeward, Angel

Darkness falls, crumpled velvet
the light of her last day.

She makes a faltering attempt
to hold her Raggedy Ann doll closer,
and rest her chin peacefully on the doll's
faded yarn hair;
Life has become an abandoned carnival,
and tired bones and tenseness
have replaced joy and laughter.

She looks homeward
in awe and in silence,
like a child in its first snow . . .
Coma, death's sleeping twin, leads her;
Goodnights were said, but not Goodbyes,
their meaningless formalities
past their privileged hour.

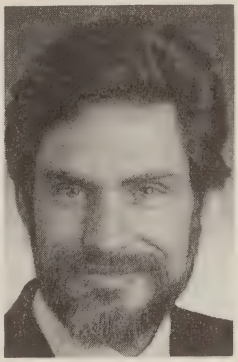
Her spirit, no longer struggling,
is ready to be freed; and her body
abdicates peacefully.
Dying was agony, and tiresome,
but death is gentle and kind.
Her grip on Raggedy Ann relaxes,
and she closes her eyes.

She looks homeward, and smiles,
an angel seeing only the face of God.

Judith Lundin Lowe

At the World Parliament of Religions: Unity, not Uniformity

ANDREW VIDICH



This historic gathering of leaders from over 125 religions generated great hope that mutual respect and understanding can eventually overcome religious conflict.

As a participant and media correspondent at the most recent World Parliament of Religions, which convened in 1993 from August 27th through September 3rd in Chicago, I was dismayed and concerned by the news media's woefully inadequate coverage. While the event was historic, not only in achieving such a diverse gathering but also in its spirit of ecumenism, the news media tends to play down its significance or to miss the point entirely.

While the opening coverage of the event noted enthusiastically that the gathering "excites the imagination and highlights the tantalizing possibilities for raising the levels of mutual understanding and tolerance so vital to a peaceable and stable world," later coverage proceeded to paint a biased and critical account. Instead of recognizing the singular importance of the Parliament as the culmination of decades of interreligious dialogue, the news media portrayed it as if one hundred years had passed without a single conference since the last World Parliament in Chicago—an oversight of considerable magnitude, considering the struggles and triumphs of interreligious dialogue in the 20th century.

While the World's First Parliament of Religions, which convened 10 years ago, pretended to be ecumenical, it was so in name only. At that time, neither Judaism nor Catholicism were considered mainstream religions in America; and Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism and the other religious traditions from the East were virtually unknown. When Swami Vivekananda gave his historic speech, he did so as an uninvited guest, swept in on the coattails of one of the more wealthy organizers. When he denounced sectarianism, which "has filled the earth with violence,

Andrew Vidich is active in interfaith work. He is one of the authors of the concluding resolutions to the Human Unity Conference of 1989 in Delhi, India.

drenched it often . . . with human blood" and called for "the death knell to all fanaticism," he did so as a prophetic voice to an audience that was almost entirely Christian and concerned more with the impact of Darwin's theory of evolution than interreligious dialogue. At the present conference, there was a virtual litany of pleas to end violence committed in the name of religion and calls "to transcend religious differences which divide faiths, and concentrate on what can unite us," (in the words of Robert Muller).

In 1955, Muni Sushil Kumar Ji and Sant Kirpal Singh Ji convened the First World Fellowship of Religions Conference at a time when the Vatican did not even have an open dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox Church, not to mention other faiths. To their dismay, they found that most spiritual and religious leaders would not sit on the same stage with other faiths, let alone speak to one another in open dialogue.

Many interfaith organizations have arisen and prospered in this century, including the World Conference on Religion and Peace, headed by William Vendly, the Temple of Understanding, founded by Juliet Hollister and now chaired by Dr. Karan Singh, and the Human Unity Conference, started by Sant Kirpal Singh. These have all been forging ahead—often silently—to promote world peace, as has Fellowship in Prayer, now in its 45th year.

> When we reach down and touch the heart of own tradition, we touch the heart of other traditions.

At the 1993 Parliament, over 125 different religious groups joined together in sponsorship, indicating that interfaith religious dialogue has moved from its infancy to its youth.

That does not mean, however, that the religious leaders of the world have all matured at the same rate. The last half of the twentieth century has witnessed horrible atrocities perpetrated in the name of religion. The call to unity and nonviolence sounded by such votaries as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Sant Kirpal Singh, Swami Vivekananda, Roman Catholic popes, the Dalai Lama, and others, have gone unheeded. Unfortunately, as Blaise Pascal noted: "Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction."

During the second Plenary Session of the recent Parliament, on Sun-

day, when various religious leaders addressed the injustices done in the name of religion, things turned contentious for awhile. When two speakers became overly polemical in their speeches, they were shouted down by the very people they intended to accuse of injustice and hatred. As things heated up, the Chairperson for the Parliament, Jim Kenny, halted the speech, in the interest of containing what could have become a volatile situation. Later, he remarked, "We should not be surprised when the real world shows up."

What was even more important, and I believe inadequately covered by the press, was the healing that took place immediately afterwards, under the leadership of the Native Americans. As the two Native American leaders walked upon the stage, they requested all the speakers to join them in a sacred Indian dance. A circle was formed and a dance for peace, which began on the stage, eventually engulfed the entire audience.

The "global ethic" declared by the Parliament stated that religion will not be used as a smokescreen for the blind ambitions of politicians. This was epoch-making and informed the world that despite the kaleidoscopic array of different beliefs and customs, leaders recognized a global

Paul M. Schrock

ethic which bound them all together. Without the last forty years of interreligious dialogue, such a conclusion would have been impossible, and certainly not with the breadth of diversity that was achieved by this Parliament. All of this was lost to a world-weary media, beguiled by a reality they themselves were not prepared to recognize.

As the Conference continued, a real ongoing dialogue between religious heads took place in the hallways and in the privacy of people's rooms. In the quiet of these rooms, communication moved from dialogue to communion and lasting friendship.

As a correspondent, I witnessed dozens of such meetings and was moved by the intensity of commitment and understanding that was shared. Brother David Steindal-Rast, considered by many as the heir to Thomas Merton, spoke of this most eloquently, when he said: "When we reach down and touch the heart of our own tradition, we touch the heart of all traditions."

Interreligious dialogue was never intended to create a single global religion or concurrence on every issue. That is impossible, as the Dalai Lama noted at the closing Plenary Session because, "each person has a different make-up, traditions and inclinations." Therefore he concluded, "It is unreasonable to expect everyone to convert to our religion."

A realistic appraisal of the Parliament of the World's Religions in light of history will certainly be much more hopeful than the media portrayed. Interreligious dialogue in our century has made great strides forward and has a very bright future ahead of it.

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The Way of Prayer answers the questions of many readers who have asked us specific questions about prayer: When, where, and how to pray; what to pray for; what you can expect from prayer; how to form a prayer group.

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* * * * * * *

What would you like to tell us about your spiritual needs, desires, experiences? About *Fellowship in Prayer*? Use the space below!

Seven Ways to a New World

CAROL BIALOCK

Women gathering in small groups all over America are rediscovering instinctual and spiritual depths lost in history.

Dolores LaChapelle's book, *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex, Rapture of the Deep: Concerning Deep Ecology and Celebrating Life,* has a last chapter called "Seven Ways to a New World." Gradually, I am living into these seven ways with slight variations in my names for them. And as I change, so does my world.

Hatha Yoga

Each morning, after ablutions, I greet the new day with 30 minutes of yoga to "come into my body." Fifteen years of practice have taught me a routine that energizes and refreshes me. I start with the mountain posture and end with the head stand. That hour in the early morning is a well-spring of life. My body awakens to the light. I am in my skin. My flesh, dishonored for so long as secondary, is one with spirit, as it is meant to be. I am whole and holy. I breathe peace into every cell. I am one with earth and sky, I believe that the world will be made new if we are happy in our own soft animal skin.

Drumming

Last year I bought a drum, round and simple, with a deep earth tone. Its beat and incantation stir the primal and instinctive. To live fully, passionately, rhythmically becomes normal and logical. Drum calls me to step out of a mechanized, computerized world into that which does not compute in our culture; into the delightfully crazy and ALIVE. It frees me to march to a different drummer, one that does not swallow the propaganda of the military build-up and the environmental devastation.

A Roman Catholic nun, Carol Bialock writes that her work with homeless women and children has guided her into women's spirituality and ecological spirituality.

Drumming frees me, and a growing number of us, to go a different route.

Dance

One of my parents' gifts to me was dancing and acrobatic lessons. Somehow the classes translated into a rhythmic flow in my blood that has made dance come natural to me all my life. Even in my "monastic cell" in Rome, preparing for final vows, joy came out in spontaneous improvisations with feet and arms and hips and hands. But it is the Dances of Universal Peace that have enabled me to visualize fearlessly a universal church. By circle dancing, using texts from all the great religions of the world, I have come to realize that a new Church of the Whole is being born, a church that honors all beliefs and that allows us to join hands and greet the divine in every person.

An insight: in the course of my life, laboriously, I have learned five languages. Now, I realize that dance—body movement—speaks a universal language, and speaks it with grace and fluidity.

Chant

Chant is another way towards a new world. I think I was born singing. My family gathered around the piano to sing, and harmonized in the car on the way to week-end vacations. I still learn short, repetitive chants, like those from Taizé, and more and more I choose chants from different cultures to keep me in tune with the whole world. The hypnotic repetition breaks through brain layers to a meditative, trance state in which I see life more simply. The lies of a greedy consumerism fall away. Truth stands free. Beauty flowers. Goodness has breathing room. Chanting puts a vibration in the air that hastens the break-down of a patriarchal, oppressive mind-set by which both men and women are bound. Chanting births connectedness.

Story Telling

Who would have thought that story telling would be one of the ways to a new world? But such it is becoming for me. I am beginning to understand that the old stories, the old myths that kept our culture going are no longer viable. They do not work. Unlimited progress, an "Amer-

ican Dream" that does not also dream for the rest of the world and the health of Planet Earth are no longer convincing. I want to be one of the creators of a new story, like the story of the twenty billion years it took our planet to unfold. The telling of that story is something all peoples have in common, and something that will inspire us to care for our earth-home. Or the story of the heroes and heroines of our own century, who have led nations and oppressed minorities to freedom; who are even now making history from the "underside." If we tell the right stories with enough verve and imagination, we will be helping to create a new story and a new world.

Celebration

LaChapelle speaks of "sage," an herb used in incense which evokes for me and for her ritual and celebration. What we celebrate is what will come to be. I am learning that one must be very alert to celebrate what will birth a new world. Bill Cane, in his spirit-filled book, *Circles of Hope: Breathing Life and Spirit into a Wounded World*, has good suggestions: celebrate sunrises and sunsets; celebrate hope at the most difficult times; invite friends to celebrate a film like *Romero* and *Gandhi*; celebrate the past steps that gave you new life and freedom; the victories of the environmental movement; the break-out of peace; a cloth shopping bag. And I would add: celebrate a new friend who challenges or inspires you in some way; a book that questions you on a deep level; or the way a group sparks your thinking *and* your acting. If we celebrate, we will be much more alive and joyful. A good, easy beginning to bring ritual into your life: *Feeding the Spirit: Creating Your Own Festivals, Ceremonies and Celebrations*, by Nancy Brady Cunningham (Resource Publications).

Circles

Circles are my seventh way to a new world. Coming together has always been magical for me, but it has become even more so as I grow older. For most of us, eating around a dinner table was our first circle. When religious life was more monastically oriented, we sat in a circle for a "recreation" period, with our sewing baskets and our laughter. Later, I formed Christian-based communities in Chile. Now I form circles called "Women: Telling Our Stories," and, through an organization I created, Networks Empowering Women, train others to create circles. Few sym-

Tom Dunham

bols convey what we hope the new world will be as much as the circle does. When we form a circle we are creating the symbol of what our world strives for: unity, roundness, a gathering of the tribes such as our world has never before seen. Actually, in the circle we can do almost all the steps I have enumerated, and we often do exactly these things in the dance circle: drumming, chanting, story telling, and all in a spirit of celebration.

The concreteness and simplicity of these seven ways appeal to me. There is nothing spectacular in them, yet they are promising steps toward wholeness and unity.

Ask Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN

Do you have a question of the heart or spirit that needs attention? Angela, our canine sage-in-residence, would love to help. Please write to her in care of FiP, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542, and she will give you her answer in our next issue.

Dear Angela,
Recently I experienced an incredible stroke of good fortune. A lifelong dream of mine has come true, but where is the feeling of excitement? Where is the thrill that supposedly comes with it? In short, where is the big whoop?

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Dreamer

Dear Dreamer,

Hearty and sincere congratulations go to you on your dream come true. Thank you for bringing up this important topic for discussion. Dreams are as necessary to us all as air, water and macaroni and cheese sauce. They are not merely the gravy over our Kibbles. Dreams are as necessary to us as air, water, and a full food bowl. They add to the quality of nap-time. Dreams are necessary for a healthy, refreshing sleep as well as a hopeful, positive waking life.

Dreams seem to have a way of sticking to our ribs when times are lean or it's a cold winter morning. Dreams have a way of sticking to our souls as well, which keeps us going when and if the going ever gets rough.

In my own life I've noticed that this stick-to-your-ribs quality of dreams has actually been of more help and provided greater sustenance to me than any other aspect of the dreams-come-true phenomenon. In many instances, the experience of having a dream still with me just about to come true, has proven to help keep my hopes high and provide me with more energy. Please do not misunderstand. I do not mean to imply that I believe that once dreams come true they are of less use to us or that

they become unimportant. All of us need to see our dreams come true. Attaining something we've longed for, hoped for, and worked for is one of life's greatest rewards. There are, however, a few things to keep in mind when our dreams become real.

First, we all need to be respectful of dreams and dream well. Sometimes even I dream a dream, it comes true, and then I wonder why I wanted what I dreamt of. Once a dream comes true, it may not resemble in the world what the dream felt like in your heart. Some disappointment about it all might slip in there right along with your dream. It is also wise to have multiple dreams in case one turns out. I find this experience very unsettling. How do we carry on without a dream waiting to come true? For safety's sake, I suggest keeping multiple dreams available.

Although having a dream come true can change our lives for the better in a dramatic and profound way, it is important for satisfaction's sake to not ask more from our dreams than they are capable of delivering to us.

For myself, I know no matter how much chicken I am able to freely scarf up from the kitchen floor, it will never turn me into Lassie. Chicken will never turn me from a mutt into a pup with papers. No matter how many macaroni-and-cheese-sauce containers I get to steal, hide, and lick clean, I still have fleas, and there is still that annoying aroma of a clean blanket on laundry day.

Is it possible perhaps that the big whoop you ask about is not actually to be found in the act of the dream coming true? Is it possible that the big whoop of a dream coming true can be found in the *hope* that the dream provides, or in the quest of the dream itself? Is it possible that it may be more vital to our well-being to dream our dreams than it is for them to actually turn out? And while we're at it, when we have a dream come true, how big is the whoop supposed to be and how long should it last?

Like any good guru, I've now raised more questions than I've answered. All I can do is to offer you all some observations I've made about what happens when my own dreams come true. These observations I leave with you now.

I spend many happy and energetic hours puttering to the kitchen filled with chicken want and chicken hope. I'm ready for *any* possibility, but mostly for chicken. While in the kitchen eagerly and intently watching any human who also happens to be there, I experience my dream

about to come true imminently. This dream of chicken falling to the kitchen floor keeps my spirits up and my energy high. An interesting thing happens when chicken and I make contact. For five seconds, about as long as it takes me to snatch a piece of chicken from a human hand, I am in bliss. I am ten feet off the ground. I'm in seventh heaven. I've just had a dream come true. Well before the chicken even hits my belly, the fuss is over. I'm left trying to recall what my dream come true tasted like on my tongue. I'm left asking, as I lick my lips, I did swallow it—didn't I? That *was* chicken—wasn't it? Then, like the questioner, I ask: Where's the big whoop?

In other moments I may not be in pursuit of a dream come true. My buddy Barbara and I may be sharing the same snooze, or she may be rubbing my chest for a long time, or I am next to her, licking my paws with great purpose. It is in these moments of connectedness to another soul on the planet when I am not needing or expecting a dream to come true that the strangest thing will happen. I'll have a dream come true. In a moment of uneventfulness, a feeling will sweep over me that I can only adequately describe as a big whoop. In this quietness, nestled next to my

Cliff Moore

buddy, I will feel all fixed up, sweet-smelling, and flea-less. I will feel like I have all that I need, and that all that I have is plenty.

I do not know what the scientists and researchers will make of these observations of mine, but I hope all of you dreamers out there have big whoops as satisfying as my own have been.

The question of dreams come true is a big one, and like any good growing guru, I reserve the right to come back to this subject again at a later date for further discussion. Until such time, I hope all of you find the big whoop you are seeking and that your dreams always sustain you well and are bountiful.

Faithfully,
Angela

"Ask Angela" Headed for Best Sellerdom!

We are delighted to announce to Angela devotees and spiritual seekers all over the world that Angela's sage advice is now in book form. Published by Continuum Publishing Company, under the title *Ask Angela: Answers to Life's Mysteries from Man's Best Friend*, by Angela, with Barbara Ackerman, the 120 page paperback sells for $9.95. You may order your copy by calling the publisher's toll-free number: 1-800-937-5557.

The Teaching

ALANA WOODS

Lessons in aging gracefully and graciously can be learned from any of God's creatures.

A stranger passed by today. He was very old and weary. I watched him from the hill as he panted from the steepness of it. One could see it was no easy task for him to accomplish. He rested now and again, then painfully pulled his old tired body on. I walked down a ways to greet him and let him know I was a friend. It pleased him that I did that, and he laid down and rolled his big sad eyes towards me, licking my hand. I would have helped him up the rest of the hill, but he was so heavy with the weight of the years, I thought it best he continue at his own speed. At last he was on top of the hill where the grass was soft and cool, and he lay there, panting. I brought him a bowl of cool water which he gratefully lapped. The family pups' curiousity to see the old Beagle got the best of them, so they trouped over and jumped over him, and playfully tried to get him to make a move . . . But his energy was spent, and he lay there hardly breathing.

After some time he moved to the sidewalk where it was warm from the heat of the day. It probably felt good to his poor aching joints. His visit over, he silently moved away, hobbling through the tall grass in the pasture, moving as though he knew where his destination was, and with gentle patience, steadfastness and determination, he plodded on.

The conversation we had, the understanding that was felt, could not be . . . put in words. But I knew the stranger and I shared a special beautiful moment. For me it was a teaching. Patience, steadfastness and determination were the attributes I most needed at that time.

The *I Ching*, the Chinese Book of Changes speaks of a moment like this as a "penetrating influence," when we are seeking to accomplish an important aim, we must direct our thoughts in gentle consistent directions. Gentleness is the key. If we can keep our goals simple and clearly

Alana Woods is a freelance writer in Santa Fe, NM.

Tom Dunham

defined, and move forward with gentle patience, steadily persevering, we grow into gradual refinement in our lives and achieve important aims at the same time. This lesson has served me many times over the past 25 years, as I move through my life and seek to follow the highest that is for me.

World Blessing Ceremony

MICHAEL EXETER

Thursdays from 6:00 to 6:30 GMT, people all over the world are united in prayer. Would you like to join them?

In a quiet place behind our many worlds is a wellspring of healing current so needed at this juncture in planetary history. A shared focus of love can be released in silence to nourish the world. What better symbol to replace the bloody heritage of religious wars on this planet? We stand together on ground made sacred by our honoring of Life in one another.

Participants in the World Blessing Ceremony agree to "meet" at the same time each week wherever they are on the globe. In a half hour of quiet, focused blessing spanning the time zones, their wave of love regularly washes over our common home. Others are being drawn in, and the currents continue to intensify, extending a spirit of blessing and healing.

The Emissaries celebrate the important work of healing and blessing in many groups around the world, and recognize that our mutual cooperation and support charges the global matrix of love. To help facilitate this process, the Emissaries wish to open their international "World Blessing" network to all who would like to join them. These ecumenical weekly times of radiant prayer are held each Thursday from 6:00 to 6:30 pm GMT. At present more than seventy locations around the world participate.

A list of participants' locations are circulated to those who are interested, and updated from time to time. If you and/or your group are interested in joining this weekly time of World Blessing, please contact us at the following address:

"World Blessing"
The Emissaries
5569 N Cty Rd 29
Loveland, CO 80538 USA
FAX 303.679.4233

Michael Exeter, Eighth Marquess of Exeter, is the Director of the Emissary program, which has spiritual centers in over 150 locations around the world. His weekly addresses, which offer a spiritual perspective on pressing contemporary issues, are distributed in over 60 countries.

The Un-Naming of God

LISA MCDONOUGH

Her quest for "an authentic desert experience" led to a unique, challenging, and highly rewarding Lenten practice.

It was already a week into Lent and I was softly panicked. As a Catholic, each year I would traditionally give up something in order to take part in the spirit of Christ in the desert. Such forty-day spiritual exercises had been rather ordinary much of my life. One year I gave up TV, another a favorite type of music. Often it wasn't even that noteworthy or unusual.

But this year was different. Nothing seemed to click, to ring true as an authentic desert experience. Perhaps I was trying too hard, I reminded myself. With an inner shrug, I decided to let go and be open. I would go through Lent just being present to God as I was.

And that's when it happened. God! The name of God. That very word was a possession, a habit, a pleasure all on its own. The word of God spoken in many conversations and prayers. God in casual passing, as in "Oh God, I can't find the car keys." Or God without much pause for thought and meaning. God as habit and ritual.

At the same time, I was finding this word "God" was no longer a vibrant and alive word. In a literary sense, God was dead. It was barely a second thought, a mere formula. I began trying to see and feel the living God in new ways and was occasionally saying Goddess or Great Spirit to reawaken the sense of awe and mystery.

It was then that I knew my Lenten meditation would be vastly different this year. There would be no outward manifestation or visible sign this time. It would be all inner work. The name of God would sit quietly on my lips for the remainder of Lent. I would literally not speak the word God to let "God" be renewed.

It seemed simple enough. However, I was unprepared for the intensity and difficulty of this, as well as the joy. At first, there was emptiness

Lisa McDonough is a free-lance writer interested in Celtic spirituality and a book reviewer for the Palm Beach Post newspaper. She welcomes correspondence at: 45 Edinburgh Drive, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418.

Tom Dunham

and uncertainty. What other word had such power and meaning? Without the word "God," my spiritual vocabulary was taxed. I thought of the Apostle Paul speaking of the Unknown God (Acts 17.23), and realized how limited I had been by those three letters.

Yet, what a symphony of wonder was also set loose! In my fumbling for the familiar, I found myself using the term Creator most often in prayer. Then, gradually, the limits of language began to unravel. There were so many possibilities! They grew bigger and deeper with each day, as I realized that no one word could really capture the total essence of Divinity. Words such as Source, Peace, Light, Friend came forward, as did Mother, Father, Companion.

Eventually there was a growing awareness that the Divine was neither masculine nor feminine, but a Harmonious Presence encompassing both values. Spirit, Flame, Truth, The One. Then it became not so much a passive noun, but a verb. Dancer. Comforter, Changer. Picker-Up-of-Pieces-and Making-All-New. Laughter. Weeper. Even Joker.

Ultimately, my favorite word was a simple one. *Lover*. Dearest Loving Lover. Suddenly the whole universe was alive again with a living, breathing presence that I could no longer bottle into language, but could only glimpse. Mere words were like grabbing the tail of a cat skimming by: impossible to catch but warm to the touch. Words that changed, evolved, beckoned and shimmered with beauty. Words that were teaching me, lifting me up and ultimately setting me free into the unknown.

For the rest of Lent, I fell into the bottomless pool of mystery of the Divine Presence and didn't mind drowning. I still slipped and said the word God in forgetfulness now and then. That taught me what a habit this language of ours is, and how deeply ingrained.

Losing my cultural word also knit me closer to the experience of others. In leaving behind the compass that my one word had been for so many years, now I could appreciate different maps of the same journey. Jehovah, Yahweh, Thor, Abba, Allah, Inanna, Ra . . . the list is long and timeless. Truly, we are all searching.

Ultimately, I discovered how deep our hunger is to speak the tender yet powerful names of God. We need the intimacy it inspires. It is a knowing and a claiming as well as a belonging. However, only when I lost my tongue, in the silence of this interior desert, did I learn to speak afresh, and even occasionally not to speak at all. Thank you, God, O Great One, Who Knows Us All.

An Easter Contemplation

BEATRICE BRUTEAU

"It is no longer I who live, but Christ in me," wrote St. Paul. This is the goal of the Christian life, the reason for celebrating the great inseparable mysteries of death and resurrection.

The concern of the contemplative life is to seek transformation from the state in which we act out our selfish drives to a state in which we will the welfare of all together as a living, loving whole.

In the Christian tradition this transformation is celebrated through a special set of mysteries at Easter. It is useful to practice contemplative life in conjunction with such liturgical seasons as Lent, Passiontide, and Easter. They keep up in the rhythm of nature, the seasons of the year, the hours of the day, the passages of our natural human life from birth to death. Insofar as they commemorate the saints, liturgical celebrations also keep us in the memory of those who before us set an example, and thus they keep us in the effort to realize the meaning of our life.

Liturgical celebrations make use of many different images that reveal to us the secrets of our deepest reality. It is the business of the contemplative to be alert to these, sensitive to them, to be penetrated by their symbolism and carried by their power, to resonate with their significance. The Divine Life is hidden in the heart of each one of us, but the Great Mysteries reveal it to us, if we can see.

In the Easter Mysteries we follow the high drama of the last days of Jesus. We need to remember that the figure of Christ, in the consciousness of the contemplative, may mean many things, on different levels. One such meaning which I want to draw attention to here is the one in which the Christ Figure works to reveal to us the deeper secrets of our own life, of our own identity and destiny. The Christ in this interpretation means our own inner, higher, born-of-God Self.

Beatrice Bruteau, who has religious background in Vedanta and Roman Catholicism, is a founder of the Schola Contemplationis, a network community for contemplatives of all traditions. A prolific writer, her most recent book is Radical Optimism *published by Crossroad.*

We experience our life as full of ups and downs. One day our psyche is, as it were, ringing with the Hosannas of the crowd that welcomes Jesus to Jerusalem, but the next day there is already grumbling, doubt, suspicion, and in a short time the mob is calling for our destruction. Notice that this mob, and that cheering crowd, are our feeling, our emotions. They bat us about, first one way, then another. We can be at their mercy—and to some extent we always are—but we can also rise above them. Jesus did not entrust himself even to the adoring crowd. And his dignity and adherence to the truth made him judge over those who would injure him. We can do the same with the crowds and mobs of our shifting, fickle feelings.

The true Self is not of the same breed as the feelings. They are from below, as Jesus says, while the true Self is from above. A "good gift," it comes down from the Divine Source of all light and goodness. There is something in the center of our being that adheres to God. This is what the contemplative seeks, and seeks to be consciously identified with.

In our gross nature, we tend to identify ourselves with our feelings and moods and emotions, even with our bodies and their sensations—all fleeting, changing, mortal, and fairly mechanical, like things that run down their assigned tracks and do their tricks when their number is called. They are not free. But the spirit is free. It doesn't have an assigned response to every stimulus. It acts from itself.

There is something in the center of our being that adheres to God.

The transformation that we seek through our contemplation of the Easter Mysteries is the abandonment of the sense of being this deterministic and controlled being, what the Apostle Paul called the "old creature," and the full realization of being a new creation, free and living in the Christ.

It is a radical transformation. It is represented in the Easter Mysteries in terms of death and resurrection. It means that we give up completely one principle of life and begin to live by another.

Everything that we had possessed or in which we had clothed ourselves is taken from us and stripped away. The very breath of life ac-

cording to the old pattern is snuffed out by the asphyxiating cross. We had lived to ourselves, seeing ourselves as if each of us was an island, each seeking its own welfare and perhaps the welfare of those closest to us. What has to change in the contemplative transformation is the way of *seeing*. We have to shift our eyes somehow from this atomic pattern to the organic imagery that Jesus proposes at the Last Supper.

At the Last Supper, Jesus institutes the sacrament of Holy Communion, a powerful image, a momentous revelation of how the spiritual world is structure: He puts himself, under the guise of food, literally into his friends, to be their spiritual nourishment, and calls on them to do likewise, to love one another as he has loved them. When we thus feed one another we come to realize "I am in you, and you are in me." This is the new vision we must acquire.

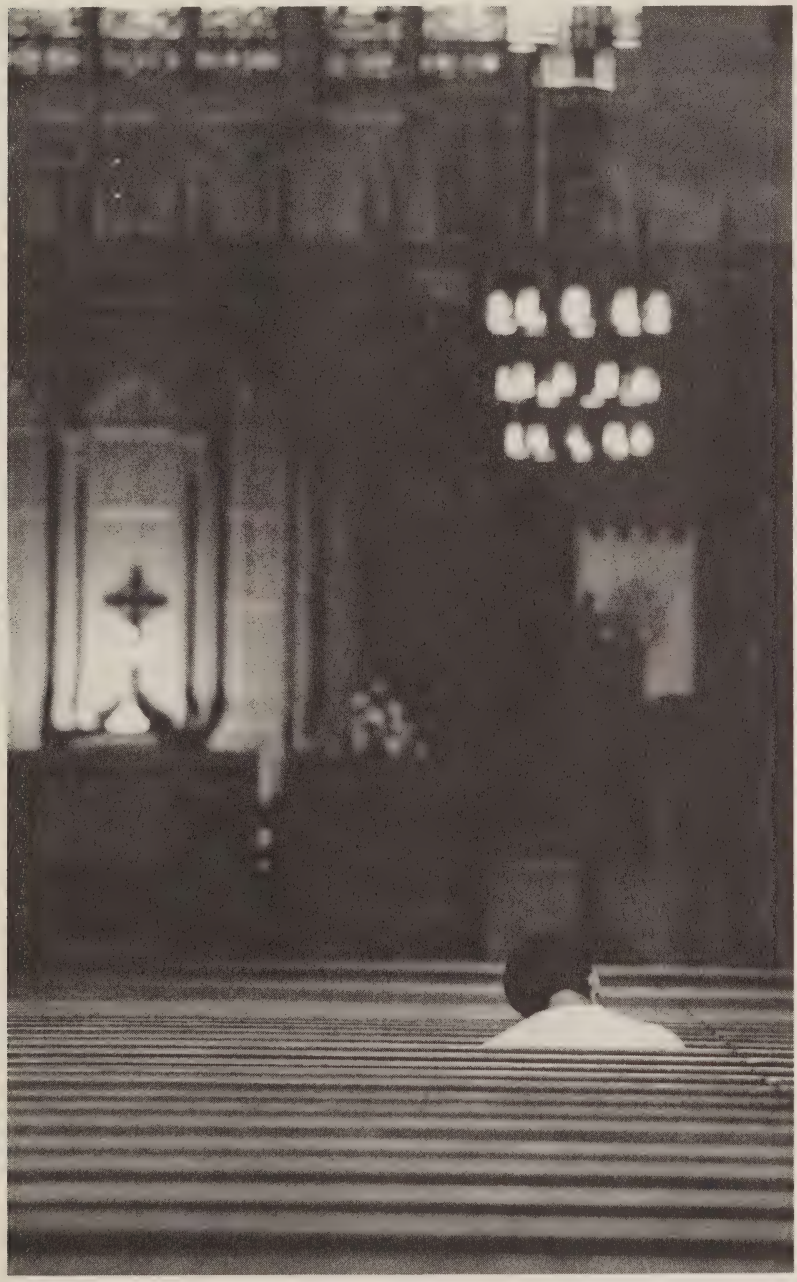
By constantly meditating on this sacrament, by contemplating it and savoring its meaning and reality, we will gradually attain the desired vision and begin to see all the world in terms of Jesus' pattern of reality, in organic unity. When we do, and to the extent that we do, we will experience his resurrection: the new life, the new *kind* of life, life according to a new and different principle.

The old selfishness will be gone because the very ground by which it was meaningful or possible will have been swept away. This is the kind of transformation we seek—not merely to "give up" the ego-centered works and pomps of the old life, but to destroy the very *basis* that made them possible, the context or frame of reference in which they made any sense.

Jesus offers us a new frame of reference, a new context. But we have to adjust our eyes until we can see it. His vision of reality at first appears to us like a picture that is just areas of white and black and gray, with no recognizble form at all. But as we continue to look, suddenly the form emerges, the shaded areas all fall into a meaningful pattern, and the picture is obvious.

It is to attain this insight vision, this rearrangement of all the elements of conscious life, that the contemplative works and prays and meditates. All our practices of virtuous acts, control and cultivation of the senses, the intellect, the will, and the affections, all our reflection on the revealing mysteries, are directed to this end, that we may see what Jesus sees, that where he is spiritually, we may be with him.

The Easter Season is a miniature of the whole spiritual life. We renew



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our appreciation of what we are about every year as we celebrate these powerful events and we renew our commitment to devote ourselves to the realization of the truth that they reveal. The Christ, the one who knows the Ultimate, lives in us. As contemplatives we learn that as we become quiet, as we strive to practice detachment and devotion and service to others, the Christ Consciousness in us rises up more and more, and more and more we find that the old "self" no longer lives in us but the Christ is our true Self.

Rock Ritual XVI: Once Upon a Rock

ROBERT O'ROURKE

Spend five minutes in quiet contemplation with a rock, and you will see a host of nature's "winged creatures" come and go.

I had stretched the garden hose across an outcropping of rock to water the Virginia Creeper vines making their slow ascent up the side wall of our home. A small leak moistened the surface of the rocks making up for the dew that failed to materialize in the arid morning air. I placed the hose near the vines and left to mow the weeds along the fence row in the half acre.

Thirty minutes later I returned to shut off the water when I noticed a group of small, black ants gathered together on the rocks. I had studied these little workers all summer. They are up at dawn gathering their winter store of food and still working late into the evening. Several ants would pause as if to drink. Their congregation seemed joyful. There was much touching and what seemed to me a great deal of embracing . . . even kissing before each ant returned to work.

I decided to give a few moments to watching the ants. Words of Solomon came to mind, reminding me (and all human kind), to "Go to the ant . . . Observe her ways and be wise." Indeed. Rocks and trees have been my teachers. Why not ants?

Not long into my "observation" a wasp dabbled at the edge of the rocks; at a respectful distance so as not to disturb the ants. She was collecting moisture to build her adobe clay home under the eaves of my workshop.

As I focused on the busy wasp I wondered if at some time in the long past an Anasazi Indian might have hunkered down to study one of these "winged creatures" and learned from her the design for the first adobe dwelling hugging the side of a mesa at Frijoles Canyon.

The ants continued to come and go. The wasp returned in intervals. I stayed. Between visits from lady mud dauber a delicate, black and yellow butterfly settled lightly on the rocks. The morning sun was shin-

A writer, poet, and sculptor, Bob O'Rourke resides in Colorado. Lisa Smith, whose illustration accompanies his article, is a Colorado artist.

Lisa Smith

ing more brightly now. Had she come to cool and rest for a time? In only a moment she was gone.

As long as the rocks remained damp, the rituals continued. I had meant to mow the weeds today, but as a childrens' poem reflects:

> A brown bird sang in the apple tree, and a butterfly flitted across the field,and all the leaves were calling me . . . So what could I do but laugh and go.

Ants, butterflies and wasps have a way with me. At least for today.

BLESS THIS FOOD: AMAZING GRACES IN THANKS FOR FOOD
by Adrian Butash, 1993, Delacorte Press, hardcover, $14.95.

"Prayer," Adrian Butash tells us, "is how human beings relate to God, nature and their place in the divine order of things." Indeed, giving thanks for the sacred gift of food was humankind's first act of worship.

In this charming book, whose comments you will want to make a prayerful part of your daily life, you will find 132 graces, blessings, and prayers of thanksgiving for our daily gift of life. The author has chosen, with consummate taste, from Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Confucian, Taoist, and Native American sources as well as from the more familiar Judeo-Christian tradition. You will be tempted to use them all in gratitude and celebration. *PW*

A PATH WITH HEART: A GUIDE THROUGH THE PERILS AND PROMISES OF SPIRITUAL LIFE
by Jack Kornfield, Bantam Books, New York, 1993, 352 pages, paperback, $11.95.

A renowned psychologist and meditation master in the Buddhist tradition who appeals widely to people of other faiths, Jack Kornfield may become one of America's finest teachers of the spiritual way. Writing from an inner grace, he relates the universal message of self knowledge and compassion with enchanting stories and practical exercises and meditations.

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We welcome your comments. Please write to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, *291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.*

We in Malawi appreciate and are very encouraged to learn of the ministry of *Fellowship in Prayer*. We ask to work with you to give and gain knowledge, wisdom and understanding.

Rev. M. D. Mulela; Blantyre; Malawi, Africa

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I understand that economically and culturally Lithuania is like Rip van Winkle—just waking up after decades of sleep. Life will not be easy but with God's help I will persevere for three years (preparing students for pastoral ministry). Thank you.

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291 Witherspoon Street
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office - (609) 924-6863
fax - (609) 924-6910

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EDITOR
Mary Ford-Grabowsky

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Linda D. Baumann

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